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Social Sciences and Humanities
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Conseil de recherches en
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Canada

Instructions to Observers.

1. The date when the Hive Bee first visits flowers.

3. This must not be mistaken for the large White Butterfly, which generally makes its appearance a little later than the Small White one.

It will probably be a stimulus to more thoughtful young people to know that in various parts of the country there are still wanting accurate observers of the above-named phenomena.

The training in youth in such observation will tell on the happiness as well on the general intelligence and accuracy of the young people in later years.

A well-trained teacher may open up a source of the greatest enjoyment by pointing out the interlacing of the various sciences. The influence of the sun on life immediately connects Astronomy with Biology, Botany, etc. Geology is illustrated by Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, and even by Astronomy. The science of Chemistry, especially in all which is connected with the hydro-carbons, is a help to understanding the physiology of plants. Mechanics reach on the one side to Astronomy, on the other to the muscular system of animals.

The tendency of all physical laws to range themselves under one supreme law, of all forces to exhibit themselves as modifications of one force, cannot but impress the reflecting mind. The Unity of Nature becomes more surprising the more the countless facts of Nature are studied, and in training our children in Nature-lore we are preparing them to be not only scientific, but religious, and religious not in the sense of being instructed in many dogmas, but in the sense of being filled with an ever increasing sense of the manifold wisdom of God.

ATTENTION.

By Mrs. M. Wolryche-Whitmore.

Among the books set for study in the *Mothers' Education Course* is a rather sombre-looking volume called "*Mental Physiology*," by Dr. Carpenter. I have generally found that my friends are repelled by the title and pass it by in favour of some more attractive-sounding work, but those among them who have had the courage to attack it, have been immediately enthralled, and are generally unable to put it down.

The Editor has invited me to bring some of the subjects treated of in this delightful book before the readers of the *Parents' Review* in a series of papers; but I would beg any who feel interested in the working of that most wonderful of physical organs, the human brain, to study Dr. Carpenter's book for themselves.

We are all familiar with the fact that it is not the eye which sees, nor the ear which hears, but the brain. The eye and ear are merely instruments by which impressions are conveyed to the brain. Therefore if the optic or auditory nerves, by means of which impressions pass to the brain, were destroyed, the man would be blind or deaf, although the eye or ear itself might remain perfect. The part of the brain to which impressions made on the different senses are conveyed is called the Sensorium, and here the sense-impressions become sensations. But it is not only the external senses which send their reports to the sensorium. If it were so we should be conscious indeed of sights, sounds, etc., but should have no consciousness of the emotions and ideas passing through our own minds.

Lying above the sensorium is another portion of the brain, called the cerebrum; here sensations give rise to thoughts and the higher mental operations are carried on. A double set of nerves connects the cerebrum with the sensorium. The ascending fibres carry the report of changes in the sensorium up to the cerebrum, where further changes take place under the action of what we call thoughts. The descending fibres carry the result of these thoughts to the sensorium, and thus we become conscious of them. These nerve-fibres connecting the cerebrum with the sensorium are called the nerves of the internal senses. The sensorium, therefore, receives two classes of impressions,—those of external objects through the nerves of the external senses, and those of thoughts passing through our own minds, through the nerves of the internal senses. Let us take a familiar example of both classes of impressions. Certain vibrations strike upon the ear, coming from a certain direction. The message is conveyed by the auditory nerve to the sensorium and we become conscious of a particular kind of noise, let us say a whining and scratching outside the door. The message goes up to the cerebrum by the ascending nerve-fibres and a little cerebral change takes place there. The descending fibres bring back the result to the sensorium, "It is the dog and he wants to come in." This impression may give rise to other cerebral changes (such as that his paws being muddy he had better stay out), or it may be reflected downwards on the nerves communicating with the muscles, and we may get up and open the door.

The faculty of selecting one among the innumerable impressions continually presented to the sensorium is the faculty of Attention. The choice of the impression upon which we will bestow our attention may be determined either by the strength of the impression and the attractiveness of the object, or by our own will,—that is to say, attention may be either automatic or volitional. When attention is purely automatic, and the will exercises no stimulating or restraining influence, the impressions, and consequently the ideas, and words, follow each other exactly as they present themselves to the mind, and are usually connected by a very slight thread. The rambling discourse of Mrs. Nickleby is an instance of the verbal expression of such thoughts. We have all met thinkers and talkers more or less of this type.

In the little child attention is necessarily automatic and depends entirely on the attractiveness of the object; for the will is not strong enough to confine the attention to one thing, if another, more attractive, claims it. What the child cannot do for himself the teacher can do for him. Before the age of lessons the training in attention or inattention has been begun. The child who is examining some object and testing it in his own way, is sometimes interrupted and his attention drawn away from it to some other thing by a too kind friend—he has had a lesson in inattention. On the other hand a little child is sometimes inclined to hurry over the pages of his picture-book without bestowing more than a hurried glance on each, or he has, as we say, one eye on his pictures and one on the cat. He must be led to give his little mind to the thing in hand, to the exclusion of everything else, until he has mastered it, so far as he is able to do so. When the first lessons begin, they must be such as to attract his attention, not to repel it. It is the business of the teacher to keep the child's attention, he cannot yet be expected to do it for himself. The lessons must of course be short and varied, for the brain is a physical organ just as much as the leg and even more easily tired; it is as useless to expect a little child to attend to his letters for half-an-hour at a time as to expect it to stand on one leg for a like period. But the child has to learn to keep his own attention, that is to say, his will must be strengthened to make and sustain the necessary effort, so the next step as he gets older is to supply him with motives to fix his attention on tasks, possibly less attractive in themselves. The efforts must not be too much prolonged and the tasks carefully graduated to the child's capacity. The teacher, no longer obliged to keep the child's attention for him, must still be on the watch to see it does not wander, for in this matter, as in others, habit is everything.

There are two kinds of inattention characteristic of two different orders of minds. The first is the inattention of those who find a difficulty in fixing their attention, and are easily distracted. The second is the inattention of those who are too much absorbed by each impression and have a difficulty in passing from one to another. To the latter class belong the absent-minded and the unobservant. It is always obvious to which class a child belongs, and the training in attention must be modified to suit the peculiarities of the individual. The child who is able to brace himself to the effort of keeping his attention in response to an adequate motive has learned a valuable lesson, and is in a fair way to obtain the still more valuable power of fixing his attention at the command of his own will. It is harder to direct the attention to ideas than to sense-impressions. This is fully recognized in the Kindergarten system, where as many of the child's senses as possible are brought to bear upon the subject in hand. Concentrated attention has a very remarkable effect upon sense-impressions, but the cause is so little recognized that the result is apt to be looked upon as something occult and mysterious. Dr. Carpenter gives some remarkable instances of the augmentation of the sense of touch from concentration of attention. He has, he says, "repeatedly seen hypnotized patients write with the most perfect regularity, when an opaque screen was interposed between their eyes and the paper, the lines being equidistant and parallel, and the words at a regular distance from each other. . . . . The writer will sometimes carry back his pen or pencil to dot an i, or cross a t, or to make a correction in a letter or word." This, at first sight, seems somewhat "uncanny," a case of "seeing farther into a mill-stone" than the rest of us. Yet it is but another manifestation of a phenomenon with which we are all familiar—the wonderful exaltation of the senses of hearing and touch in the blind. I am told that many blind people can tell the *colour* of woollen materials by feeling them—different dyes producing slight differences of texture or surface. Even under normal conditions the effects of concentrated attention are sufficiently wonderful, especially when strengthened by practice, or hereditary transmission, or both. The Arabs of the Sahara can smell a fire thirty or forty miles off. A musical conductor can single out the offender in a large choir or orchestra. The wine-taster and tea-taster are examples of a special sense brought to great perfection, by practice in concentrating the attention on one special kind of sense-impression.

We all recognize one effect of attention on sense-impressions, when a child who has given himself some slight hurt is too much engrossed with his game to notice it, though, perhaps, at another time it might have made him cry. We make practical use of this when we "distract his attention" from his small woes, or when we advise an older child not to think of what is giving him pain, but to think of something else. Dr. Carpenter tells us that "before the introduction of chloroform, patients sometimes went through severe operations without giving any sign of pain, and afterwards declared that they felt none, having concentrated their thoughts, by a powerful effort of abstraction, on some subject which held them engaged throughout." Fortunately, such a "powerful effort" is not required very often, as I fear few of us would have our attention so completely under the control of the will. This serves, however, to show what may be done to control the attention where the will is strong enough.

Sensations which originate within the body are as much augmented or diminished by attention as those arising from external causes. Even a toothache becomes more bearable when our attention is diverted from it by some very interesting book or conversation. Indeed, sensations may be created by directing the attention to any particular part of the body. What tickling sensations we undergo, often without the slightest cause, if we harbour suspicions of the cleanliness of a foreign hotel. It is even possible to effect actual physical changes in any part of the body, by persistently directing the attention to it. These changes are probably caused by an impression on the nerves of the part. Thus a real illness often follows a fancied ailment, and, on the other hand, a real cure follows sufficient faith in the remedy, even when the latter is of the nature of a bread pill. A very amusing instance of a cure of this kind is given in Dr. Coombe's "Physiology." Sir Humphrey Davy was about to try a new cure for palsy, and his patient had been deeply impressed beforehand with the certainty of its success. Before administering it a thermometer was put into the man's mouth. He jumped to the conclusion that this was the remedy, and at once declared that he felt better already. Nothing more was done and he was not undeceived, but told to come again next day. The same performance was gone through daily, and at the end of a fortnight the man was well.

A want of volitional control over our attention is the great cause which may lead us to "bore" our friends. We are threatened, let us say, with that overwhelming domestic calamity, the want of a cook. Our attention is naturally absorbed, and our mind, left to its own control, works automatically round and round this one subject. We can think and talk of nothing else. We meet our friends, who have, perhaps, their own cares and interests, we give them the conventional sympathy that politeness demands, but our attention has never left our own subject and our tongue soon returns to it, until our most sympathetic listener is worn out. Or, perhaps, our automatic brain-activity shews itself in another form and we are "absent," mechanically answering questions and making remarks while our thoughts are busy elsewhere—pursuing a train of thought over which the will has no control. The attention which has been trained to answer to the will does not act in this way. However interesting a subject, the will can call the attention from it in a moment, to be concentrated instead on a subject which demands, at the moment, the individual's whole powers. The intellectual value of this power is obvious, but it has also its moral value—as we shall see more fully by-and-by—for only by the power we have of controlling our thoughts can we hope to control our actions. If we have no power of choice over the subjects which shall fill our minds, how shall we fulfil the command, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

SCALE HOWE.*

BY THE REV. CANON RAWNSLEY.

JUST opposite the gate of The Knoll, at Ambleside—famous for its memories of Harriet Martineau and the visits of her friends, Charlotte Brontë and Emerson—is the approach, from the main road, to the grounds of Scale Howe.

Scale How means "the high place, at or of the 'scales' or huts," perhaps it may mean the Viking's burial place above his huts, if so, we may, as we stand in the grounds of Scale How, think of how Hamil the Dane came hither in the middle of the 9th century, and chose this fair place for his 'sitting' or 'seat,' from which the town of Ambleside gets its name.

But the interest of Scale How centres in the reminiscencies of Poets of the 19th century.

The Poet of the Bratha, better known as the Hymn-writer Father Faber, knew Scale How well between the years 1830 and 1840. He was curate of Ambleside and tutor to the sweet-voiced Harrison boys, whose father and mother then dwelt here.

The House is linked also with the memories of Wordsworth; Wordsworth's niece, Dorothy,—who had come to Rydal Mount, as an orphan, in 1814, and been welcomed as an elder daughter into the Rydal Mount family, then sadly diminished by the deaths of little Catherine and Thomas—became, in 1823, the wife of Mr. Benson Harrison, of the Lund, Ulverston. Some years later, "the beautiful Mrs. Harrison," as she was called, came to live at Scale Howe, and till the year 1890, she continued to be the gracious presence of her delightful home.

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* *Scale Howe* is the beautiful new home to which the "House of Education" has migrated; a 'mansion' which includes lecture-rooms, practising school, and abundant accommodation for all the students. We are deeply indebted to the Author o those most delightful volumes, *Literary Associations of the English Lak* for writing this Sketch for our readers.—ED.